

On November 19th officers designated to be Army Information Operations practitioners graduated from the 12-week Functional Area 30 Qualification Course in a ceremony at the Lewis and Clark Center.

During the ceremony, the class recognized Major Scott Howell as their Distinguished Honor Graduate and Major Chika Ihenetu, Captain Joseph Mason, and Captain James Pradke as the class honor graduates.

The graduation speaker Colonel Matt Venhaus, Deputy Director of Information Operations Policy, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, charged the new FA 30s with becoming “IO educators” for the Army.

Colonel Venhaus said he knew what the graduates were getting ready to do, saying he had “been there. I’ve sat where you’re sitting.”

Venhaus, a school-trained FA 30 himself, told the new IO officers that there would be “senior leaders you’re going to work for who think they know what you do.”

He told the graduates that they would have to teach others in their units, including their commanders in some cases, what IO can contribute to mission accomplishment.

In the FA 30 QC students studied the integration of information capabilities to achieve a variety of desired effects in support of the commander and unit.

Some lessons included the similarities between IO and civilian marketing theories and practices.

To illustrate these similarities, course participants paid visits to Barkley, a Kansas City marketing firm, and a regional manufacturer/distributor headquartered in the Kansas City area to discuss their marketing efforts throughout 21 states.

Students also went to Entercom Communications Corporation's radio stations in Mission, Kan., to take a close look at message formulation and delivery via one of Afghanistan's most efficient media.

Reserve Component IO course counterparts joined the class for a two-week focused study of Operational Security, Military Deception and a variety of practical exercises on Key Leader Engagements, Interviews with the Press, Lethal and Non/Lethal Targeting, and Joint IO Planning.

Colonel Venhaus, a 2002 graduate of the FA30 IO QC, said he attended the course in a classroom in the basement of the Child Development Center. His class discussed the core and supporting capabilities of IO while children ran up and down the hall outside.

Now, the IO qualification course is conducted in a permanent location. COL Venhaus told the students that this change in venue, among other things is indicative of Army senior leadership's realization of the growing importance of IO.

Another indication of the strong interest in IO is the participation of Allied Liaison Officers to the Combined Arms Center. Three of them—from Brazil, France, and Germany—eagerly participated in a Chief of Staff Briefing exercise during which they played the role of a coalition chief of staff receiving an information briefing about IO from students in the qualification course.

The FA 30 QC students studied the various aspects of IO, including Public Affairs, Soldier and Leader Engagements, Military Information Support Operations, Operational Security and Military Deception, among others.

Students also received up-to-date IO Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures from military instructors who recently returned from deployments as information operations officers.

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